

CUTTING A WATERMELON

There will be 1,000 slices of a big watermelon distributed among our patrons in May. You may get the best of the sand-dollar slices. See the terms, on this page, of our Guessing Contest—a legitimate plan of sharing profits with patrons.

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Bayard's Courier

A Story of Love and Adventure in the Cavalry Campaigns.

By B. K. BENSON.

Author of "Who Goes There?" "A Friend With the Countess," etc.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

A MATCH.

"We will bring the device to the bar," said the man.

Shakespeare.

More shots were heard. In the little parlor beyond agony, outside, the blast of the trumpet, the ring of hoof, the loud command; and through the winding paces, the flash of musketry, the shouting, the effort; a few moments passed, and a man was at the door—an officer. He took off his hat. "Excuse me, ladies—ah! there is one. He good enough to come out a moment, sir."

Mr. Armstrong rose and went to the door. The preacher followed.

"We are in pursuit of some Confederates, and we fear that we must question you concerning their whereabouts. They rode into your yard, sir."

Mr. Armstrong said nothing; he merely nodded; he understood that a moment's time was valuable. The preacher, however, made reply, "I assure you, Captain."

"Capt. Hanley," said the officer.

"I assure you, sir, that there is no person here who is in arms against your Government. In the house are none but ladies, except Mr. Armstrong and myself; I may add that the occasion which brought me here, sir, in the exercise of my calling, was one which every gentleman would honor."

Capt. Hanley raised his finger.

"No more, sir!" Then he strode to the veranda and ordered some of his men to surround the house and others to search the grounds. He followed the captain, and, placing one hand on the officer's arm, and raising the other vertically, he said: "Capt. Hanley, you are a gallant man. Your inopportune visit has prevented marriage, an institution which God has blessed."

Hanley looked concerned.

"Come in, Captain, and let me present you to the lady who would now be a wife for your son," said the officer.

The officer followed Mr. Hanley, and he waved away his men who were coming up the steps; the house was already besieged; if any one was here, he could not now get away; moreover, the rebels had been mounted; they could not have hidden their horses—no horses were now here; therefore, all the rebels had escaped, unless some one was hidden in the house, who approached the door of the parlor; the preacher bowed, and said, "Ladies, I beg your kind consideration of a gallant soldier whom duty has unfortunately led to a most ungentlemanly act; he is the penitent, ladies; this is Capt. Hanley; then, still conducting the Captain, he stood before Lucy, and said, 'Capt. Hanley, Miss Armstrong."

Lucy felt the need of helping the play; possibly she knew that Hanley was aware of the preacher's art, and was simulating credulity. What Mr. Gibbs's motive was, Lucy could not tell; she knew, however, that she did not know the power which habit can sway; Gibbs knew it in regard to others, not in regard to himself. His performance, so far as manner was concerned, was not an act of second nature; yet he had the wit to know that ceremonial politeness carries with it a powerful demand for reciprocity, and he knew by the play of his voice, that he was at least an outward gentleman.

Capt. Hanley, last in hand, bowed to Miss Armstrong. "I am extremely sorry, madam, to have been so long in coming; but my duty could have forced me to intrude upon you."

"Have a seat, sir," said Mr. Armstrong. Lucy felt that she ought to force herself to speak; Mr. Hanley, however, at her suggestion, said, "Capt. Hanley was just standing."

"No, sir," said Lucy, "we cannot consider the fact that your duty must frequently have been so long in coming; but my duty could have forced me to intrude upon you."

"Certainly," broke in Gibbs, "I'll show them the rooms myself, Captain, if you like. I've known them for 20 years; I know every room in it. Though, I assure you, sir, that the search will be useless. There were three soldiers here—three only—and they have gone."

Hanley knew that his men had chased two rebels; the third one, doubtless, was the one to be married. This man had been seen to get away; the house ought to be searched. And this preacher, who was so penitent, might be not be maneuvering for delay? Better demand his pledge.

"If you will give me your word that no soldier is concealed here, I will withdraw my men," said Capt. Hanley.

"Certainly, I give it," said Mr. Gibbs. "And I, too," said Mr. Armstrong.

Squire was almost repeating the terms of Lucy's note; she urged her lover to try; the Federals were under the command of an officer who respected helplessness, and restrained his men, she said, but there was no sign of an early departure; Dan and Charley must leave this dangerous spot, and at once; there was nothing to hope for in remaining. Mr. Gibbs had gone, and the cavalry persisted. Dan must not reply to Lucy's note; it would be too dangerous.

"Where's your horse, Squire?"

"Gone to pasture," said Lucy.

"Sure the Yankees haven't got him?"

"Oh, yassah; he's way down de branch."

"Then get him and well ride," said Morgan.

"No help for it, boys; our time is out tomorrow."

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Morgan and his eight men had retired from "Snicker's Gap," but the Federal cavalry regiment had cut them off from Snicker's Gap; and on the 28th a party of Federals had driven them out of Philomont toward Aldie, and had pursued them for two miles. It is not necessary to dwell upon these days, so gloomy to Morgan. He did his duty, not with greater zeal certainly, but with greater intensity than ever; his thought was bitter, and he wished relief from thought. Lewis was with him; Armstrong was far; Squire surely was a prisoner, or dead; Lucy—so nearly his wife—was within the enemy's lines; Morgan's case was hard.

On the 29th Morgan's men rode into Aldie once more, and again were driven out and pursued on the Philomont road. On the next day they rode again into Aldie, and were driven out, the pursuit being kept up for more than two miles toward Mountville. Morgan and his men took to the woods at the south—in Goose Creek Swamp. Hidden from the road they heard the enemy crossing the covered bridge below, the hoofs of many horses resounding in the wooden tunnel. When the noise

had ceased Morgan sent a man foot to get near the bridge and watch; the scout speedily returned with the report that the cavalry had halted on the hill beyond the bridge, near the village of Mountville, and that they were preparing to bivouac. It was now just at sunset.

Morgan knew that Stuart was by this time somewhere east of the Blue Ridge, and that he had crossed, in all likelihood, at Snicker's Gap. He divided his eight men into two; he ordered them to get across Goose Creek above in any way they could, then to ride for Union, for Philomont, for Lee's encampment, and for the crossroads between Bloomfield and Cartersville, if necessary. Stuart was to be informed of the bivouac of the cavalry company at Mountville, and was to be urged to send a force to surprise them; Morgan would remain; he would get across the creek and watch the enemy, so that when the Confederates reached the ground he could find them in a dangerous spot, and at once; there was nothing to hope for in remaining. Mr. Gibbs had gone, and the cavalry persisted. Dan must not reply to Lucy's note; it would be too dangerous.

"Where's your horse, Squire?"

"Gone to pasture," said Lucy.

"Sure the Yankees haven't got him?"

"Oh, yassah; he's way down de branch."

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